

Pedestrian Advisory Committee Resolution



To: Minneapolis City Council, Minneapolis Public Works,
MPRB Board of Commissioners, MPRB Staff

From: Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Date: March 1, 2023

Subject: MPRB Plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles

The Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) supports many aspects of the Plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles and believes that an improved design remains possible. As pedestrians, we are concerned by a plan that so closely mirrors our current car- dominated, polluted, and impervious built environment. This plan attempts to address destructive results of car dominance without mentioning or addressing their emissions, pollutants, and the land use given to private vehicles.

Before addressing the design elements of the plan, it is imperative to address a community engagement process that permits those with wealth and privilege to perpetuate a destructive, collapsing status quo and to demand that they control public land regardless of public good.

Genuine community engagement and connection is vital to creating a plan that works for all users of the parks and lakes. We urge the MPRB to evaluate and improve its community input process to ensure that a broad range of voices have equal opportunity to weigh in and contribute. This process should include its established Community Advisory Committee and interested people from across the entire city. It should also create opportunities for direct and deep conversation with Indigenous communities whose ancestors walked and stewarded this land.

We appreciate the challenge and pressure this process brings. Barriers to change can feel insurmountable, but if we all want to survive and gift the future to the many next generations, we need to be braver and smarter than we have ever been.

We are grateful for the work and passion of the staff at the MPRB in building this plan. There are many elements of this design to be proud of and which will create opportunities for all to enjoy the chain of lakes.

Our specific feedback to designed elements of the plan is as follows:

Zone 1: Northwest Cedar Lake

We support narrowing the parkway in each of the proposed scenarios for sections B and C and appreciate the work MPRB has done to ease space constrictions with viewing areas and widening the bike/pedestrian path to standard 10ft two-way bikeway and 8ft walking trail widths. We strongly urge MPRB to consider eliminating private vehicle access here, or at a minimum, making it one-way. The design as shown does not meet the City's Complete Streets policies. Instead, it continues to prioritize private vehicle access over explicit policy commitments to sustainability, equitability, and accessibility.

Zone 2: Northeast Cedar Lake

The PAC appreciates the soft surface formalization of existing desire paths, and we encourage the MPRB to consider materials that will allow for maximum ADA access to these paths, especially with connections to the trail system and an ADA accessible picnic area.

The PAC encourages MPRB to include facilities that make access to the park here more accessible to all users, including permanent bathroom and changing facilities at Cedar Lake East Beach.

Zone 3: Kenilworth Channel and SE Lake of the Isles

The PAC is pleased to support the following elements:

Reducing the complexity of the street for drivers at the parkway and the SE corner of Lake of the Isles. We suggest a tabled intersection with visual cues indicating priority for those walking/using wheelchairs/biking in this space.

Closing the sidewalk gap on the south side of the Isles parkway at the south end of Isles.

The connection between the dog park and the Midtown Greenway. We urge MPRB to add an ADA accessible connection and an overlook space for dog-lovers to enjoy the park as well. We would also like to see bike parking (with room for trailers) and other amenities here, as well as directional signage.

We support the addition of a marked tabled walkway from the dog park to Lake of the Isles pedestrian paths.

New connection from the west side of the channel between Bde Maka Ska and Isles to the Lake Street sidewalk. We would like to see this sidewalk extended along its natural line to accommodate those who travel from further west on Lake Street.

The PAC supports the Kenilworth Channel connection as crucial for pedestrian access to both lakes, transit, and the trail system. We would like to see MPRB use soft surface materials that support ADA access. This is especially important to the light rail connection.

In addition, we ask MPRB to consider these elements:

Provide a path along the south side of the Kenilworth channel as well, and a bridge to connect the two at Cedar. The PAC appreciates that there are some infrastructure difficulties with building a bridge over the Kenilworth Trail and that shoreline restoration may provide future possibilities for both dead end path extension and a shift in perception of the space from looking like private property to public property.

The PAC strongly supports creating and enhancing connections between existing bike lanes/routes at 24th, 26th, 28th Streets West and the chain of lakes.

Zone 4: North Lake of the Isles

The PAC appreciates the intersection improvements at Euclid and Lake of the Isles Pkwy East.

We are particularly disheartened that the MPRB removed the initially proposed road closure on the north side of Lake of the Isles Pkwy. We believe this was a missed opportunity to create more peaceful green space by connecting Kenwood Park and Lake of the Isles. This would also protect wildlife particularly where so many people gather and reduce our automobile-centric approach to parkways.

West and Northwest Lake of the Isles Pkwy

We are thrilled that the plan provides for the obvious connection between Cedar and Isles along the channel. We urge MPRB to provide a path along the south side of the channel as well, and a bridge to connect the two at Cedar.

Cedar Lake Pkwy

We are pleased to see pedestrian access around all of Cedar Lake, including both paved sections south of the channel and soft surfaces north of the channel.

General Comments and Recommendations

The PAC strongly supports seasonal parkway closures to private vehicles, and adaptable barriers the rest of the year to protect wildlife and keep cars moving at parkway, not commuter, speeds.

We urge the MPRB to make all parkway intersections all-way stops. All-way stops make our parks more accessible and safer for all users.

The PAC calls for salt-free winter maintenance to include clearing its walking/wheelchair paths and sidewalks in addition to biking paths. We object to the winter policy diverting all users onto a single path, particularly in one of the most popular areas for walking, wheelchair use, and biking. This is especially important in the areas with extremely narrow paths.

The PAC believes that Welcome Entry Points should—to meet basic human needs—provide public restrooms, seating, shelter from sun and rain, water fountains, and inexpensive snack vending.

The PAC requests clear directional signage around winter ski trails.

The PAC strongly supports removing all two-lane sections of roadway that do not serve public transit. Two-lane parkways waste already limited space and increase impervious surfaces while encouraging commuting and higher speeds. In short, they are a cumulative harm to our lakes and waterways and to the ability of people to access and enjoy them. MPRB should, per Complete Streets policy and Minneapolis priorities and commitments, reallocate reclaimed roadway to people and nature by de-paving or other means.

We remind MPRB that sidewalks are our city's only fundamentally accessible routes and must be wide enough to accommodate people in conversation and enable them to comfortably pass those moving in the opposite direction. Where these widths cannot be maintained due to constrained right of way, an equitable planning process will remove parking and narrow or remove drive lanes before taking space from the only mode available to everyone.

The proposed plan around Cedar Lake in particular does not address equitable accessibility for users of all ages and abilities and a closer consideration should be applied to the plan. While many residents have expressed a desire to keep elements of Cedar Lake hidden and more secluded it is important to ensure that the Plan's goals of supporting accessibility are achieved. The PAC believes that it is possible to unite accessibility and preservation of natural areas through careful selection of materials and design.